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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Libya, Syria/Iran,
President Asad Speech, Al-Hariri Investigation, Iraq,
Palestinian Territories (11/14)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported the visit of a Libyan delegation carrying a message of solidarity with Syria from Colonel Qaddafi.

Papers also reported the visit to Damascus by the Iranian FM, who will supposedly be mediating between Syria and Lebanon to ease the recent tension caused by President Asad's speech.

Headlines featured an official Syrian statement denying reports carried by Al-Jazeera that MFA's legal advisor Riad Al-Daoudi has reached an agreement with the International Investigation Commission, and denouncing a statement by Iraqi Defense Minister Al-Dulaymi that booby-trapped cars are entering Iraq across the Syrian border. The source described Al-Dulaymi's accusations as "baseless" and "irresponsible."

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad receives a message of solidarity from Colonel Qaddafi and discusses current developments and pressure on Syria with members of the General Secretariat of the Arab Nationalist Congress" (Government-owned Tishreen 11/14)

"Lebanese demonstrations of protest expand, carrying a political message: Western custodians are concerned about the Al-Saniora government. Arslan [Chairman of the Lebanese Democratic Party]: Any incursion into Syria will lead to an earthquake in the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"Iranian FM Manojahr Mattki is due in Damascus today to discuss developments in the region with Syrian officials" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"Responsible source denounces Iraqi Defense Minister's statement: It is baseless and part of a programmed political campaign to sabotage affinities between the two brotherly peoples" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"An MFA source denies reports carried by Al-Jazeera that MFA's legal advisor Riad Al-Daoudi has reach an agreement with the International Investigation Commission: Mehliis has refused to conduct his investigation in Syria or under the umbrella of the Arab League" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"Syrian working masses send a message to UN SecGen: The UN must not market colonial goals, the policy of hegemony over people and violation of the dignity of other countries" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"Al-Shara discusses current developments in the Palestinian arena with Talab Al-Sane', Arab member of the Keneset, emphasizing the importance of solidarity and national unity" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"Israeli forces attack Jenin. Two Palestinians martyred. Palestinian FM Al-Qudwa warns against the danger of Israeli policies for negotiations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/14)

"Iraqi President Talabani: British forces could leave Iraq in one year" (Government-owned Syria Times, 11/14)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"If it Is not Targeting, What is it? Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented: "We do not know how President Bush and his Secretary of State Rice find all this time every day to talk about Syria, level charges at it, attempt to interfere in its internal affairs, and discuss minor details that do not befit the president of a superpower."

"When President Bush attends a conference or an international economic forum, he does not find it embarrassing to mention the name of Syria and attack it repeatedly as he speaks. He does the same thing when he attends a domestic US event, such as the commemoration of Veterans' Day two days ago. Delivering a speech to mark this occasion, he devoted part of his speech to attacking Syria and accusing it of things that no sound intellect would accept, regarding Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq.

"President Bush says Syria interferes in Lebanon's internal affairs. This statement is absolutely untrue. As a matter of fact, Lebanon, which is subject to US tutelage, has now become a place and passageway for conspiracy against Syria, as President Asad pointed out in his speech....

"President Bush says Syria blocks the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. However, everyone knows that no such process exists. Also, everyone knows that Syria has always supported peace and that it hasn't interfered in Palestinian affairs, as the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian factions have testified....

"President Bush says Syria does not prevent armed men from entering Iraq across its border, but this statement is sheer allegation, or, rather, a deliberate false charge. Syria does not want to cause harm to its brothers in Iraq....

"UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who is supposed to be the main figure responsible for the multinational forces in Iraq, said in a clear voice in a televised interview that he has no evidence to show that armed men infiltrate Iraq from across the Syrian border.

"With regard to Rice's statements on Syria and what she concocts against it, they outdo President Bush's statements by a great deal. Many people said that Rice would be more rational, given her knowledge and academic position. However, this view seems to have disappeared in front of the sweeping flood of the neo-conservatives...."

"They Have Got the Wrong Address"

Muhammad Ali Buza, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote: "President Asad, in his speech, clearly diagnosed the problem with some of the superpowers and the reasons behind the vicious campaigns and pressure against Syria...."

"The Asad speech exposed the nature of the onslaught and the plan that targets this region and this nation.... It is therefore natural for Bush and Rice to attack and distort the speech and to reiterate the fabricated accusations and provocative statements...."

"Threats do not frighten or intimidate us, because we are innocent and have a just cause. The Asad speech had the firmness, decisiveness, pride, position, and political wisdom that make it harmonious with the sentiments of the Arab public, expressing this public's aspirations and its will to resist and stand fast as the way to face the challenge and prevent chaos."

"Pressure of Waiting"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said: "Detlev Mehlis' rejection of all invitations to visit Syria raises questions about the credibility of the investigation.... The investigation commission has not been active in the past few days.... Maybe Mehlis wants to stall for time until 15 December to ask for another extension and, consequently, keep the region under the pressure of waiting additional months, during which the United States will have prepared other files to push into the crisis."

"Many people believe that this is the reason behind the investigation commission's sluggishness in responding to the Syrian calls and rejecting Syria's proposals for cooperation.... The UN secretary general and the Security Council member states need to play their roles and examine the reasons that drive the commission to slow its work and reject the Syrian proposals...."

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